



SLSA BULLETIN

Title:	Implementation of Mandated Wearing of Certified Surf Helmets in Surf Boats
Date:	1 st October 2014
Document ID:	Bulletin 5/14-15 Implementation of Mandatory Surf Helmets in Surf Boats
Department:	SLSA Capability and Capacity
Audience:	State/Territory Centres, Branch Centres, All Clubs, All Surf Boat Crews, All Members
Summary:	This bulletin reinforces new rules, effective 1 October 2014, that mandate the wearing of certified surf helmets in surf boats in both training and competition

Background

Since 2010 there have been significant changes to the management of Surf Life Saving's events to increase the safety of competitors. These changes include (but not limited to):

- Introduction of compulsory high visibility lycra vests for all competitors
- Introduction of risk management applications to align competition related risk assessments
- Introduced onsite risk managers at major events to assess the suitability of competition conditions and who have the authority to suspend any event on the spot

SLSA remains committed to ongoing enhancement of safety and protection of members competing and training for SLS competition.

This bulletin reinforces new rules, effective 1 October 2014, that mandate the wearing of certified surf helmets in surf boats (in both training and competition) except in conditions of acceptably low risk as defined in the decisions below:

Decisions

The following decisions have been approved by the SLSA Board and incorporated into SLSA Policy effective 1st October 2014:

- 1) Effective from 1st October 2014 the SLSA Board mandate EN1385 certified and SLSA approved (SLSA approved after satisfactory fit for purpose testing of the product) surf helmets be worn in surf boat competition and training.
- 2) That accredited surf boat sweeps holding a minimum current level 1 SLSA coaching and current sweeps accreditation be permitted to issue a dispensation of the mandatory wearing of a certified surf helmet in a surf boat training context subject to completion of a documented SLSA approved risk assessment that determines an acceptably low risk level* should helmets not be worn.

Note: Please refer to SLSA Water Safety Procedure for more information regarding pre-activity risk assessment. The SLSA smartphone "risk apps" are an acceptable form of pre-activity risk assessment.

- 3) That there is a mandatory appointment of a 'boat panel' of at least three (3) qualified, accredited and experienced surf boat representatives, and endorsed by the Competition Committee for an event, to assess hazards and provide advice to the Referee regarding sport specific safety considerations including recommendations to the Competition Committee that surf helmets be optional for a competition in the event of acceptably low risk levels*.



- 4) That a competition committee may issue a permitted to issue a dispensation for the optional wearing of certified surf helmet in a surf boat competition subject to consultation with the appointed 'boat panel' and completion of a documented SLSA approved risk assessment, that determines an acceptably low risk level* should helmets not be worn.

* A nominal wave height of 1m be considered as the maximum wave height threshold where surf helmets may be considered for optional use. Wave height is only one consideration in assessing surf zone hazards (examples of others could include: a heavy shore break, littoral drift, shorter wave periods, wind strength and direction) thus accredited sweeps (training context) and the competition safety authority (competition context) will be required to complete a risk assessment in determining any decision to declare surf helmets optional.

Surf Sport Rules – Amendments to 34th Edition SLSA Surf Sports Manual

The following amendments are made to the 34th Edition SLSA Surf Sports Manual effective from the 1st October 2014:

Section 2.5.2d: All boat rowers and sweeps must wear an SLSA certified surf helmet as defined in the SLSA approved gear and equipment manual during training and competition except when an accredited boat sweep (in training) or the Competition Committee (in competition) has issued a dispensation for the wearing of surf helmets subject to the completion of a documented and approved SLSA risk assessment that has determined an acceptably low risk level* should helmets not be worn.

Note 1: A nominal wave height of 1m is considered as the maximum wave height threshold where surf helmets may be considered for optional use. Wave height is only one consideration in assessing surf zone hazards (examples of others could include: a heavy shore break, littoral drift, shorter wave periods, wind strength and direction).

Note 2: Should conditions alter during the course of of an event the Referee may reverse the initial decision for the optional wearing of helmets and mandate that all boat rowers and sweeps must wear an SLSA certified surf helmet in competition.

Section 2.5.2e: The wearing of SLSA approved surf helmets is compulsory for IRB Patients in both training and competition.

Section 2.5.2f: The wearing of SLSA approved surf helmets is optional in all craft events unless otherwise noted i.e. mandated wear for Surf Boats and IRB Patients.

Section 2.5.2g: Until October 1st 2015, surf helmets worn in competition may be in either the manufacturers colour OR painted in accordance with the club competition cap OR covered in material in accordance with the club competition cap (i.e. a lycra club cap over a helmet). Check with manufacturers for advice on retrospectively painting surf helmets. From October 1st 2015 surf helmets in competition must display the club competition cap colours.

Note: While this dispensation has been granted to assist compliance for identification purposes and ease of competition conduct it is strongly recommended that helmets be presented in club colours as soon as practicable.



Section 2.5.2h: The wearing of registered competition caps or rubber or silicone type swim caps is permitted in Pool Rescue Events and the Simulated Emergency Response Competition provided that matching swim caps are worn in team events.

Section 5.1.h: A Boat Rowers Panel SHALL be appointed to discuss boat racing conditions at competitions with the referee to represent competitors. The panel may contain representatives from different clubs, Branches or States depending on the nature of the competition. The Competition Committee shall endorse the members of the Boat Panel for that competition. The Boat Panel shall act as a communication link between the competitors and officials and act under the following guidelines:

(no further amendments to section)

Section 5.1.g: All boat rowers and sweeps must wear an SLSA certified surf helmet as defined in the SLSA approved gear and equipment manual during training and competition except when an accredited boat sweep (in training) or Competition Committee (in competition) has issued a dispensation for the wearing of surf helmets subject to the completion of a documented and approved SLSA risk assessment that has determined an acceptably low risk level* should helmets not be worn.

* A nominal wave height of 1m is considered as the maximum wave height threshold where surf helmets may be considered for optional use. Wave height is only one consideration in assessing surf zone hazards (examples of others could include: a heavy shore break, littoral drift, shorter wave periods, wind strength and direction).

Implementation Detail

Implementation Timeframe:

- The policies detailed regarding the use of Surf Helmets in Surfboat competition and training and amendments to the Surf Sports Manual are in effect from 1st October 2014.

Equipment Requirements:

- Surf helmets must meet the SLSA specification; most notably the safety standard and certification that underpins the specification - European Safety Standard for canoeing and white water sports EN1385 plus additional considerations required for a fit for purpose design. Refer to the [SLSA Approved Gear and Equipment Manual](#) for a full list of approved surf helmets and supplier details.
- Certified Surf helmets are subject to competition scrutineering requirements.
- Please consult with individual manufacturers for information and advice on retrospectively painting helmets to avoid impacting warranties and structural integrity of the helmet.

Operational Requirements:

- When required (as defined in decision 1 and 2, above), **ALL** surf boat crew members and sweeps must wear an SLSA approved surf helmet fitted correctly and secured under the chin when in the boat on the water.
- The surf helmet should remain fitted if a crew member falls into the water until at least they are clear of all other boats on the course.
- The certified surf helmet must remain fitted if a crew member falls into the water.



- All crew members must ensure that their surf helmet is ready and available during all competition periods regardless of whether a dispensation to the wearing of surf helmets has been made since conditions may change throughout the competition period.

Funding and Supply:

- On average the cost range for a certified surf helmet is between \$40-\$155. Therefore the average cost for each surf boat crew will be approximately \$200-\$775.
- Clubs/Members will be responsible for providing certified surf helmets at events.
- Refer to the [SLSA Approved Gear and Equipment Manual](#) for a full list of approved surf helmets and supplier details.

Surfboat Hazard Rating Pilot Project:

- SLSA will be working collaboratively with Bond University and the Australian Surfboat Rowers League (ASRL) under a pilot project to trial the *Surfboat Hazard Rating* as an assessment of prevailing surf conditions specifically for surfboat competition.
- For the scope of the trial in specific surfboat carnivals recognised by SLSA, the Surfboat Hazard Rating system is an accepted form of risk assessment to inform a decision by the Boat Rowers Panel and Referee to mandate the wearing of surf helmets.
- All activities including competition and training outside of the scope of the trial must abide by the policies detailed in this Bulletin.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- SLSA will monitor the introduction of this policy through a dedicated research project in partnership with Monash University Injury Research Institute.
- To assess compliance with the policy, an observational study will take place investigating members behaviours while participating in competition and training.
- Members will have an opportunity to comment on their attitudes, understanding and comprehension, and suggest improvements to the policy via an online survey.
- A full evaluation report will be provided to the SLSA Board in mid-2015.

Further Information:

- Contact SLSA via:

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